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CONFERENCE OUTLINE

The Reduction of World Tensions

*As drawn up by the
Faculty Committee of the
University of Chicago*

STAT There is general agreement that the political tensions that presently endanger world peace are mainly between the two major powers and the blocs associated with them -- the Soviet Union and the United States. These tensions have numerous sources. Many of them are inherent in the fact that the Soviet Union and the United States are the major world powers. Some of them are due to a lack of understanding and communication. Some arise from the international character of the communist movement and its expansionist tendencies. Tensions, also, occur because of the particular strategic and military posture taken by the United States and because the two major blocs face each other directly--in Berlin, in Germany, in the Formosa Straits and in Korea.

Major tensions are also developing throughout the world in the interactions of the major powers as they affect the poorer peoples and nations of the world. The current efforts of the Soviet Union and the United States to weaken the position of the other and to strengthen their own in the poorer and uncommitted areas of the world are becoming a new, real threat to peace. Economic aid and technical assistance are now being used as instruments in the cold war. If present trends were to continue, one sees in these developments seeds of distrust, suspicion and a multiplication of political tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States, rather than the converse.

While the open and obvious threats to world peace are the tensions and conflicts between the two major powers, these are not the only sources of tensions. Every nation, no matter how small or weak, has its national objectives and pride. While the immediate threat to world peace of tensions among the smaller nations or between some of the smaller nations and the major powers may not be of the same significance as the tensions between the two major powers, it seems appropriate to explore the

possibilities of devising institutions and rules of law that would contribute to a reduction of them and resolution of such conflicts.

It is not possible in any one conference to explore in depth all of the sources of tensions and conflicts that presently threaten world peace. We have decided to concentrate on three major sources of tensions. We have been guided in our selection by two major considerations. First, we believe that these are particular tensions that are of major importance. Second, we believe that it is possible to present and discuss constructive ways of reducing some of these tensions. On the basis of these criteria we shall concentrate on the following three major areas:

1. Barriers to communication;
2. Inequalities between poor and rich areas of the world;
3. Gaps in the rule of law for the resolution of large classes of international conflicts and disputes.

A brief indication of the scope of each of the areas is given below in the outlines of the background papers.

The background papers have two major objectives. The first is to provide the necessary factual and historical background for intelligent discussion. The second is to present and analyze critically the major alternative means of reducing tensions. It is not necessary that the authors of the background papers support any particular means of reducing the underlying tensions; the papers will serve adequately if they help to focus and sharpen the discussion on the extremely difficult and complex issues involved.

Brief Outlines of Background Papers

A. Barriers to communication

Many of the tensions that exist in the world today are real in the sense that they grow out of genuine and important conflicts of interests. But other tensions result

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primarily from a lack of understanding of the feelings, objectives and purposes of peoples and governments. Most governments of the world, some much more than others, have consciously restricted the flow of information across national boundaries and many governments have used various forms of censorship to prevent their own people from obtaining knowledge of the actions of their own government or other activities that may occur within their territory. Two background papers will be commissioned.

1. Barriers to freedom of press, radio and television.

This paper should describe the nature of the major restrictions on the free flow of ideas that now exist, perhaps by a series of case studies of four or five nations -- the United States, the Soviet Union, one or two nations in South America and one of the new nations of Africa or Asia. The following questions might be considered: What purposes are the barriers supposed to serve? What possible costs or consequences would occur if the barriers were entirely removed? Are there any types of barriers required by the national interests of the various countries? Do the types of restrictions on the free flow of ideas imposed by the United States result in significant impairment of good will abroad? Should the United States unilaterally remove or reduce barriers to the flow of ideas or should it do so only on the basis of multilateral or bilateral agreement?

2. Barriers to international contacts among scientists and scholars generally.

The background paper on this subject would have much in common with the one above. The basic nature of the problems are similar, but additional insight may be gained by considering one aspect of the barriers to the free flow of ideas in considerable detail.

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B. Inequalities Between the Poor and Rich Nations.

While there is a wide disparity in income produced and an even greater difference in goods and services consumed per capita in the United States and in the Soviet Union, both nations may be viewed as being among the rich nations; certainly the per capita income of the Soviet Union is substantially above the average for the more than a billion citizens of the poorer nations of the world. There is a considerable degree of mutuality of interest, though far from complete, for the United States and the Soviet Union in reducing conflicts and tensions between the rich and the poor. Over the next two decades the security of both major powers can be affected by developments in the poorer nations. If present world tensions continue, we are likely to see the spread of nuclear weapons and missiles to nations other than those now possessing such devices. Such a development would greatly increase the possibilities of an accidental, but worldwide war.

In addition, it is possible that one of the most fruitful ways of reducing tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union is to start with those issues where positions have not already been firmly established. The relations with the poorer nations, at least some of them, represents such a situation. A related issue, viewed entirely from the standpoint of the interests of the United States, is that many of the poorer nations are rightly suspicious of our motives in developing foreign aid programs on the grounds that most of our aid has gone to relatively rich areas of the world and a significant fraction of the aid to poorer nations has involved military items and has been motivated by narrow and immediate strategic purposes.

Three background papers would be commissioned

1. An examination of technical assistances, grants, loans, and trade to determine the extent to which these efforts have reduced the inequalities between poor and rich nations.

The purpose of this background paper will be to review the experiences of major nations, especially of the last two decades, in reducing barriers to trade and in providing technical assistance and various forms of economic aid, to indicate the mistakes and pitfalls that have become apparent and the nature of the positive achievements that have come from these efforts. The paper should attempt to identify the particular circumstances that are either favorable or unfavorable for, and to specify the relative advantages or disadvantages of -- freer trade, loans, grants, technical assistance programs, technical training efforts and programs for the education of foreign nationals abroad.

2. Alternative ways and means in the economic sphere, including trade and various aid programs, for reducing the inequalities between poor and rich nations.

(a) Among the alternatives the paper should examine approximately the present policies of the United States and the Soviet Union of using aid unilaterally as a means of blocking the extension of the influence of the competing major power; (b) An open competition between the United States and the Soviet Union in the provision of aid and assistance, but maintaining aid on a unilateral basis; (c) An agreement with the Soviet Union and other major Western powers to provide all aid on a multilateral basis; or (d) The recognition of certain areas where particular strategic or political interests of one of the major powers is dominant (Hungary and Albania in the case of the Soviet Union and Turkey and Formosa in the case of the United States, for example), but applying either (b) or (c) in other areas. The same for trade.

3. The aspirations and legitimate interests of new nations and colonial areas and the role the United States and the Soviet Union might play in the encouragement of their development. This paper would consider the implications of racial issues, the problems of the populations of European origin in certain areas, the possibilities of

training and other measures to improve governmental administration and legislative processes, the relative appeal of various forms of economic organization in nations desiring rapid economic development, and the positive role that major countries might take to encourage and assist them in attaining the objective to which they aspire.

C. Gaps in the rule of law when applied to the International Sphere.

Disputes between governments, between nationals of different countries or between the nationals of one country and the government of another country are inevitable. What is not inevitable is that there should be no mutually acceptable means of arriving at unbiased settlements of such disputes. In many areas of international commerce such methods, some formal others rather informal, have existed for centuries. But with respect to most disputes that result in tensions and distrust, few nations are willing to submit them to the institutions that now exist for that purpose. Nor has there been any real effort in recent years to devise new institutions or codes of law that might be useful in the settlement of disputes of an international nature. It is not possible to explore all aspects of the problem of the international settlement of disputes. Nor does it seem likely at this particular stage of history that disputes between the United States and the Soviet Union can be resolved on any other basis than negotiation. What would be explored is the possibility of the United States, either alone or in conjunction with other major Western nations, of delineating certain classes of disputes that would automatically be decided by impartial means if either of the parties involved so desired. The possibility might be explored of the United States agreeing to the impartial settlement of disputes between itself and a group of smaller nations whose political and economic power is substantially less.

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Two background papers would be commissioned.

One possibility would be to ask two competent authorities to write papers, independently of each other, on the general issue as each sees it. Another possibility is the following:

1. The nature of the available institutions for the impartial settlement of international disputes.

While this paper would be primarily factual, it would also be interpretative in the sense that explanations would be sought for the reasons why in some kinds of disputes arbitration or adjudication has functioned successfully while in others relatively little has been accomplished.

2. The possibility of creating a "rule of law bloc."

This paper would explore the implications to the United States and other nations of agreeing to settle certain types of disputes through a system of courts.